SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
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The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Megan Savage, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

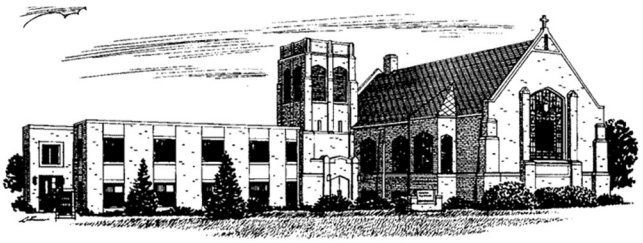
Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

Typical Sunday at Saron:
Fall, Winter and Spring:
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40 Learning Hour for Ages 2-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer of 2023 (beginning June 4):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!*



PASTOR JOAN'S ARTICLE FOR JANUARY 2023

I've really appreciated the "Advent Wreath Lighting" rite that we have used this year (from the SALT Project.) I have been moved by its specificity, words of challenge, hope, and comfort. And I have been struck that it seems to be a litany not just for the Advent season. It is a litany for all times and a helpful reminder as we begin a new calendar year. So, once again, I leave them with you - to ponder, to pray, to receive. Happy New Year!

Because too many people are wandering in the wilderness, because too many people are sitting in the valley of the shadow of death, because too many of our conversations are laced with conflict and bitterness, we light candles…

Because people all over the world are suffering, and we're too often distracted to notice, we light candles…

One for hope, one for peace, one for joy, and one for love…

May the light from these candles overwhelm the world.

May the light from these candles illuminate the valley of the shadow of death.

And may the fire from these candles burn away whatever would prevent God's love from being born among us.

Friends, be not afraid, even now — even now — God's love is overwhelming the world, on earth as it already is in heaven!

Pastor Joan

Saron's 2022 Annual Congregational Meeting will take place on January 29 at 1pm in the sanctuary, after a potluck in the dining room at the conclusion of the 11am worship service. We will hear reports from each committee, elect members for the Congregational Council, Endowment Committee, and the Nominating Committee, as well as persons to serve as voting members at this year's Synod Assembly. We will also review/vote on the proposed 2023 budget. All members are encouraged to attend. More information to come!

General Information

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

Watch weekly emails and door signage for any change in protocol. As of printing, masks are encouraged for those who feel so inclined but not required. Nursery workers and communion assistants will wear masks.

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Joan
Monday-Thursday Mornings
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 8am-noon
Wednesdays as needed
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)
Megan Savage (Bookkeeper):
Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:30pm

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (269/983-1273) or contacting the council president.

Note: Emails for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org to ensure privacy. Emails to Amanda and the church office should be sent to info@saronlutheran.org.

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kathleen & Phillip Preston are at Caretel in St. Joseph;
Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph;
John Olson is at the Willows in St. Joseph.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

1/2 Sophie de la Foret
1/3 Kealana Gulley
1/4 Kathleen Preston
1/14 T.J. Koehler
1/15 Colin Ashley
1/15 Pat Breyen
1/15 Meredith Hammer
1/15 Walter Schmuhl
1/16 Jonah Rood
1/18 Susan Blanchard
1/18 Hayley Frey
1/19 Claire Carter
1/19 Willow Davis
1/19 Karen Hinckley
1/19 Katherine Nadeau
1/23 Don Hafer
1/24 James Hicks
1/24 Lyra Krall
1/25 Karen Johnson
1/27 Kathi Anserello
1/28 Rev Wayne Shearier
1/28 John Taylor
1/31 Carly Knauf

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

1/1 Linda & Charles Pater
1/2 James & Jennifer Nicholas
1/19 Steven & Denise Cook

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

WITH SYMPATHY

We extend our condolences to Fran Bolson upon the death of her husband, Ron, on December 12. We hold Fran and their children, Nicholas and Natalie, in our prayers. A memorial service will take place at a later date. That information will be provided once it becomes available.

WELCOME

We were thrilled to welcome **Chuck Knebl; Reverend Wayne Shearier; and Kathy, Erik and Mark Bergh** as new members of Saron's congregation on December 18.
Congratulations! Saron is blessed to have your commitment.

Love has come and never will leave us!

Love is life everlasting and free.

Love is Jesus within and among us.

Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.

Love! Love!

Love is the gift of Christmas.

Love! Love!

Praise to you, God on high!

-Love Has Come verse 3

Thank You From the Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Committee would like to thank everyone who participated in this year's "Stewardship Season" and to all who pledged to contribute time, talents, and treasures to Saron during 2023. From the kickoff "Music Fest" on October 2nd to the "Charcuterie Feast" on November 6th, this year's focus on stewardship felt special. Maybe it was the theme, "Connecting with God," that brought home the essence of stewardship – "It's all about gratitude; It's all about giving back; It's all about God." Maybe it was the weekly devotions offered by our members – what a talented and inspirational group of people we have at Saron! Maybe it was the weekly questions that made us think of our own individual roots in Christianity – who taught you to pray? Maybe it was just the right time for us to collectively recognize that "We love because God first loved us," and that love and stewardship are the bases of our Christian faith.

Whatever it was, one of the things our committee realized this year is that while by necessity we focus on stewardship during a specific time frame each year, stewardship is not a "campaign" or even a "season." It's a way-of-life. Our own individual view of our obligation to be a good steward of all the things that God has given us basically dictates how we live our lives. And with that thought in mind, we will strive as a committee to keep our duty as God's stewards prominent in everyone's mind throughout the coming year. Thank you again for your generosity and commitment to Saron so that we can keep *"Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!"*

* * * * *

If you would like to make a stewardship commitment to God and Saron but did not have an opportunity to do so earlier, it's never too late. Stewardship is a way-of-life and a year-round thing. There are commitment forms in the Narthex that can be placed in the Sunday collection plate or dropped off/sent to the church office. Thank you!

Update on ELCA Good Gifts Program

No kidding, your help is needed . . . b-a-a-a-dly!

The October and November newsletters carried an article about Saron's 2022 Advent campaign to support the ELCA Good Gifts Program and we have had several announcements and features on the program during Sunday services. We hope by now everyone is aware of this very worthwhile effort to bring farm animals to vulnerable communities around the world.

To date we have received a lot of orders but are still running a bit behind last year's record contribution of 21 goats, 17 pigs, 17 broods of 10 chicks each, and 24 honeybee colonies. Since our "Advent" effort actually runs through Epiphany, you still have a couple of weeks to get in on the action. Please consider purchasing goat, pig, chick, and/or honeybee tree ornaments using the order form available in the Sunday bulletin or electronically on Saron's weekly email. (Hey, even if you've already bought an animal, repeat orders are welcome!) Let's beat our record from last year! People around the world are counting on us.

FORTIFY & fly

The old phrase *hurry up and wait* applies to progress at the church as much as it does to many other things in life. We've had contractors in the building to poke, measure and analyze our ideas for a ramp into the chancel area and new flooring in the sanctuary. Now we must wait for their conclusions and estimates before we can put together a proposal for the congregation. As always, we'll pass on details as they become available. Fingers crossed for steps forward in the new year!

At the end of November 2022, we had collected an additional $170 for a total of $377,436 towards our pledge total of $367,205. If you still have a pledge to fulfill or simply wish to continue giving, we will gratefully accept your gift. Thank you for being with us on this journey!

Worship

PRAYER GROUP

Join us Mondays at 11am for a time of quiet reflection and prayer, which includes lifting up the requests offered on Sundays at worship or via other means. We meet in the sanctuary.

ALTAR FLOWERS

You can sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by calling the church office. Make sure to note any special occasion to be recognized in the bulletin. Flowers are $35 per vase. Checks can be payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Thank you for beautifying our worship space! Please take them home after the 2nd service to enjoy. **Simply return the vase to Saron.**

Are you interested in becoming a member of Saron or learning more about the faith from the Lutheran perspective? If so, contact Pastor Joan.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

We will continue the Zoom fellowship at 11am as long as there is interest. The link remains the same each week and is sent out on Tuesdays.

Nursery

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that occasionally need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex. There are also clipboards with coloring pages, as well as children's bulletins, to assist kids as they transition into participating in worship. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages in our congregation and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families negotiating life with children. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions.

FACEBOOK

We often share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page and we get great feedback. It is our practice not to put names with the pictures. If you have questions, or prefer your picture not to appear, please contact Pastor.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

January 1: Name of Jesus
Numbers 6:22-27
Psalm 8
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:15-21

January 8: Baptism of Our Lord
Isaiah 42:1-9
Psalm 29
Acts 10:34-43
Matthew 3:13-17

January 15: 2nd Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 49:1-7
Psalm 40:1-11
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
John 1:29-42

January 22: 3rd Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 9:1-4
Psalm 27:1, 4-9
1 Corinthians 1:10-18
Matthew 4:12-23

January 29: 4th Sunday
Micah 6:1-8
Psalm 15
1 Corinthians 1:18-31
Matthew 5:1-12

YOUTH GROUP

Our high school youth group members met on Dec 11 to work through a Christmas themed escape room activity and eat donuts while the younger kids practiced the skit they performed at the Youth Service. It was wonderful to have so many of our high school and middle school youth participate that day by reading, chiming, ushering, and working with the little kids in the skit. They were true role models and make us proud.

We next meet in mid-January to have some lunch and play video games. Watch your email for more details. We can't wait to see you all in the new year!

Contact Merrily at merrilyannsmith@gmail.com with any questions.

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

We offer a time of age-appropriate study between the two services (9:40am-10:30am):

- **Grades 5 and Under** meet in the Sunday school classroom.
- **Confirmation Students** (Grades 6-8) meet in the confirmation classroom.
- **Adult Forum** meets in the upstairs lounge.

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

We meet Tuesday evenings at 6pm in the upstairs lounge for one hour then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. All are welcome!

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Bob Kynast (269-921-2786, bobkynast@gmail.com)
Don Hafer (269-985-3637, hafer.don@gmail.com)

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

We resume our conversation on *Acts: Catching up with the Spirit* by Matt Skinner on **January 5**. In this study, led by Pastor Joan, "*Skinner explores six key themes that illustrate the ways in which reading Acts is capable of igniting our imagination about the character of the Christian message, the work of God's people (the church), and the challenges of living faithfully in a complex and changing world*.*

A new study will begin February. You are welcome to join us on any given week. **We meet Thursday mornings in the lounge from 9:30am-11am**. Contact Pastor Joan if you have any questions. This class is open to all interested in attending, for one session or many.

*from the website

NEW WEDNESDAY EVENING FORUM & FELLOWSHIP

Happy New Year and welcome to a new season of topics! Forum & Fellowship began last year with the goal of offering information and discussion opportunities on diverse topics. While not specifically a Bible study, the gathering does attempt to view secular topics through the lens of people of faith. So far, we have looked at the ELCA's Statement on the Environment and the situation and treatment of refugees and immigrants. An attempt is made to present the information in a variety of ways - videos, inventories, shared experiences, some direct "instruction", optional outside reading, and speakers. On average, the group is around 8-10 people so there is room for more. All are welcome, including younger members that may find the topics informative. Bring a friend. We typically spend two to four sessions on a topic.

We will begin again on **Wednesday, January 4** and the topic will be fair trade. What is it? Who does it benefit? Is fair trade really fair? Is it the best way to help people?

Future topics being considered include - water wars, micro finance and micro lending, human trafficking, what does it look like to "live justly" according to the Bible?, freeing the prisoner - a comparative look at the US justice system and those found in other developed nations (Norway, Sweden), the relevance of liberation theology. We are looking forward to some good discussions and hope you will join us!

Forum & Fellowship meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 7pm.
Ed Staude facilitates this group.
All are welcome!

We are not meeting in January and will pick-up on February 5 at 6:30 in the upstairs lounge. The book selected is "Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World and Why Things Are Better Than You Think" by Hans Rosling. This is a hopeful book about the potential for human progress when we work off facts rather than our inherent biases. We will have fun with this one, from the author through the ideas presented, a lot is begging discussion. It is suggested that beforehand you read the introduction and answer the questions posed to give you even more ideas to ponder and share. Ed Staude will be our discussion leader. All are welcome to come help dissect this interesting read. **Please contact Kathy Cowall at (269)428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com** if you wish to be included on the e-mail contact list.

"Just because I know I could get a lot more done if I didn't read as much, doesn't mean I have any intention of trying it." - Because of all the Books

LIVING LUTHERAN MAGIZINE

It's time to renew your "Living Lutheran" subscription! The cost is $9. Please send cash with a note or a check with an appropriate memo. There is no official form - your payment is considered a subscription.

The Living Lutheran is the magazine of the ELCA and has lots of feature stories about ministry around the country, as well as ELCA news. Subscribing through Saron provides a significant cost reduction over individual subscriptions while still allowing it to be delivered directly to your home.

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

Deborah Circle Christmas Party will be held at the home of Linda Pater on January 11, 2023 at 6pm. A carpool will leave the church at 5:30pm for those who wish to join it. Everyone should bring a dish to share (not dessert) and also a monetary gift for the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen.

BAKE SALE

Saron Church Women thanks everyone who participated in the bake sale on December 11, 2022. Proceeds from that day came to $603. Continued donations on December 18 totaled an additional $60. The grand total of $663 will all go to the Mentor Family Fund. Thanks, again, for all your generous support.

If you have questions or know of anyone in need of help through the Mentor Family Fund, please contact Linda Pater at 269/369-1178.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering (or those not-so-noisy bills) on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to ELCA World Hunger.
Thank you for your generous offerings!

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

Simple food, honestly sourced and lovingly made creates connections, gives fuel to the fight, and starves ignorance and apathy.
- Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen

On November 24th, the Thanksgiving meal was provided to the Soup Kitchen by Grand Mere Inn. Desserts were donated by Keith Stevens in memory of his wife Jan, who was the coordinator of Saron's meal at the Soup Kitchen for many years. Thanks, Keith!

If you are able to help with the preparation and serving, or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions or need clarification on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Connor Ashley: cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks: 517/930-0579 or lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel: 269/313-4062 or kiessel@me.com
Diane Madej (Open Hearts. Open Church): 231/670-0328 or dianemadej234@gmail.com
Pr Joan Oleson: 269/983-1273 or oleson@saronlutheran.org

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

Support

The Support Committee will be meeting on the second Tuesday of each month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey at josephulrey@yahoo.com to receive more information. Thanks!

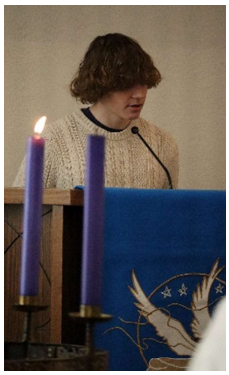
Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

GRATITUDE

Thank you to all that made the 2022 Youth Christmas Service a success! Enjoy the pictures!



JANUARY 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 **HAPPY NEW YEAR!** 10am Worship with Zoom Option **No Learning Hour**	**2** 11am Prayer Group	**3** 6pm Bible Study	**4** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Forum & Fellowship	**5** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**6**	**7**
8 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**9** 11am Prayer Group	**10** 6pm Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**11** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 6pm Deborah Circle Christmas Party	**12** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**13**	**14**
15 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**16** 11am Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting	**17** 6pm Bible Study	**18** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Forum & Fellowship	**19** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**20**	**21**
22 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**23** 11am Prayer Group	**24** 6pm Bible Study	**25** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**26** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**27**	**28**
29 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option **12pm Potluck followed by Annual Meeting**	**30** 11am Prayer Group	**31** 6pm Bible Study	**28** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**29** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**30**	**31**

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

JANUARY 2023 NEWSLETTER

2022 Youth Christmas Service